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EXTENT OF UTILIZATION OF PLAY-BASED ACTIVITIES OF PRESCHOOLERS IN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the extent of utilization of play-based activities in language development among preschool teachers in the District of Bautista, Schools Division Office of Pangasinan II. Specifically, it determined how play-based strategies enhance preschoolers' vocabulary, sentence complexity, and pragmatic language skills, and examined the relationship between selected teacher profile variables and their implementation of these activities. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed involving 40 preschool teachers. Data were gathered through a validated structured questionnaire and checklist, and were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, and appropriate tests of significance to determine relationships and differences. Findings revealed that teachers consistently implemented play-based activities, with an overall weighted mean of 4.40, interpreted as "Always." Among the domains, pragmatic language skills were most frequently developed, followed by vocabulary and sentence complexity. Most teacher profile variables showed no significant differences in utilization; however, higher educational attainment and greater exposure to relevant training were associated with increased implementation. The study concludes that while play-based learning is strongly practiced, selected activities such as puppet shows, role-playing, and dialogue-based storytelling require further enhancement. An action plan is proposed focusing on targeted professional development, provision of instructional materials, and stronger curriculum integration to sustain and improve existing practices.

Keywords: *play-based learning, language development, preschool teachers, early childhood education, pragmatic language skills*

INTRODUCTION

Language development is widely recognized as one of the most critical aspects of early childhood education, serving as the foundation for communication, literacy, and overall cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1978). During the preschool years, children experience rapid language acquisition, including vocabulary expansion, improvement in sentence construction, and refinement of conversational abilities. Scholars identify this stage as a sensitive period in which children are most receptive to linguistic input and social interaction, making early experiences crucial for shaping later academic achievement and lifelong learning (Snow, 2020).

Strong language skills not only prepare children for formal schooling but also influence their ability to build relationships, express emotions, and participate actively in social contexts. Tomasello (2009) emphasized that language is not only a cognitive skill but also a social tool, acquired and strengthened through meaningful interaction. For this reason, providing young children with rich and engaging language experiences during the preschool years is essential to ensure they can transition smoothly into formal education and develop the literacy skills needed for future academic success.

Among the many approaches to early childhood instruction, play-based learning has gained recognition as one of the most effective and developmentally appropriate methods of supporting language growth. Play is often described as the “work of children” because it allows them to naturally explore, imagine, and communicate in ways that are both enjoyable and meaningful (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

Play creates authentic opportunities for children to engage in conversation, negotiate roles, and experiment with words in real-life scenarios. For instance, role-playing enables them to assume different identities, thereby using more complex language structures to explain, question, or persuade. Storytelling, another form of play, fosters narrative development, sequencing, and imagination, while games and interactive activities provide practice in turn-taking, listening, and questioning—all fundamental aspects of communication (Weisberg et al., 2013).

Empirical studies also demonstrate that play-based activities extend beyond linguistic benefits. Play encourages children to think critically, solve problems, and collaborate effectively with peers. It develops socio-emotional competence by teaching them to regulate emotions, cope with frustration, and respect others’ perspectives (Ginsburg, 2007; Yogman et al., 2018). Thus, play-based learning fosters holistic development, equipping children not only with language skills but also with creativity, resilience, and collaboration—competencies vital in the 21st century.

In the Philippines, the importance of play as a medium of learning is strongly reflected in policy and curriculum frameworks. The Kindergarten Education Act (Republic Act 10157) and the Early Years Act of 2013 (Republic Act 10410) mandate the provision of child-centered and developmentally appropriate education for young children. Specifically, the Department of Education (DepEd) emphasizes in its Kindergarten

Curriculum Guide that play is the “primary medium of learning,” serving as the foundation for physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, and language development (DepEd, 2016).

These policies underscore the government’s recognition of play as central to early learning, aligning with global frameworks that view play as a child’s right and a powerful context for holistic development (UNESCO, 2015). In practice, however, the integration of play-based learning varies significantly across preschool institutions. While private preschools may have better access to resources and training that support play, many public schools face constraints such as large class sizes, inadequate facilities, and limited materials. As a result, the extent of play-based instruction often depends on factors such as teacher preparedness, administrative support, and school resources (Marquez & Concepcion, 2020).

Recent studies highlight that Filipino preschool teachers often struggle to balance academic demands with play-based instruction. Some view play as supplementary rather than central to learning, while others lack confidence in designing structured play activities that align with learning goals (Reyes, 2021). Moreover, socio-economic disparities further influence the extent of play-based integration, with resource-limited communities having fewer opportunities to implement developmentally appropriate play activities (Ong & Borabo, 2022).

Despite strong policy support for play-based learning in Philippine early childhood education, challenges persist in its consistent and effective implementation. Teachers often cite barriers such as insufficient training, lack of instructional materials, and pressure from parents or administrators to focus on academic drills (Marquez & Concepcion, 2020; Reyes, 2021). These obstacles can hinder teachers’ ability to fully utilize play as a medium for language development, leaving a gap between curriculum intentions and classroom practice.

Given these challenges, it becomes imperative to investigate the extent of play-based activity used, specifically in language development. Understanding how preschool teachers design, implement, and evaluate play-based strategies will provide valuable insights into effective practices and limitations that must be addressed. This knowledge is crucial not only for improving classroom instruction but also for informing professional development programs and guiding policy refinements.

By examining the extent of play-based learning in preschool language development, this study seeks to strengthen early childhood education in the Philippines. It aims to highlight practices that empower children to become confident communicators and lifelong learners, while also addressing barriers that hinder the full integration of play in the classroom. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of ensuring that every Filipino child has access to quality, developmentally appropriate, and play-based early education.

This study aimed to determine the extent to which play-based activities were utilized in promoting language development among preschoolers. Specifically, it explored

the frequency and perceived effectiveness of these activities, gathered teachers' insights on their impact, and identified common barriers to their implementation (Puteh & Ali, 2013). Ultimately, the study sought to provide valuable insights that could inform and enhance instructional strategies in early childhood education, particularly in fostering language acquisition.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of the preschool teachers in terms of:
   1.1 age;
   1.2 sex;
   1.3 civil status;
   1.4 highest educational attainment;
   1.5 teaching position; and
   1.6 number of trainings/seminars attended on play-based learning?
2. To what extent do preschool teachers utilize play-based activities in language development across the following areas:
   2.1 word vocabulary skills;
   2.2 sentence complexity skills; and
   2.3 pragmatic language skills?
3. Is there a significant difference in the extent of utilization of play-based activities across teachers' profile variables?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of utilization of play-based activities and teachers' profile variables?
5. What plan of action can be proposed to enhance the utilization of play-based activities in language development among preschoolers?

METHODOLOGY

Language development in preschoolers is a critical component of their cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Early language skills, including vocabulary acquisition, sentence formation, and pragmatic communication, provide the foundation for later literacy, academic achievement, and effective social interaction. Among the various instructional approaches used in early childhood education, play-based learning has been widely recognized as a highly effective strategy for promoting language development. By engaging children in interactive, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate activities, play-based learning allows learners to practice, explore, and expand their language abilities in authentic contexts (Toub et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of play-based language activities, however, may be influenced by teacher-related factors. Characteristics such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, teaching position, years of teaching experience, and participation in training or seminars related to play-based learning may shape how teachers design, implement,

and sustain language-enriching play activities. Understanding these relationships is essential for identifying patterns and strategies that maximize preschoolers' language development.

To explore these relationships, this study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, which allows for the systematic examination of associations between teacher characteristics and the extent of play-based learning utilization without manipulating the variables. The independent variables in this study consist of teacher profiles, while the dependent variable is the extent of play-based activity implementation and its observed impact on preschoolers' language development outcomes. By using this design, the study aims to identify significant correlations that can inform evidence-based recommendations for early childhood teaching practices and professional development programs.

This provides a detailed description of the research methodology, including the research design, participants, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, and statistical techniques used to analyze the relationships between teacher factors and play-based language development activities in preschool classrooms. It also explains how the data were systematically gathered, organized, and interpreted to ensure validity and reliability of the findings. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the ethical considerations and procedural steps undertaken to protect the rights of participants and maintain the integrity of the research process.

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, which allows for the systematic examination of relationships between teacher characteristics and the extent of play-based learning utilization without manipulating variables. The independent variables in this study are the teachers' profile factors (e.g., age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, teaching position, years of experience, and trainings/seminars attended on play-based learning), while the dependent variable is the extent of play-based activity implementation in promoting preschoolers' language development.

Using this design, the study aimed to identify significant correlations between teacher-related factors and the frequency and quality of play-based activities used in the classroom. Data were collected under naturally occurring conditions, ensuring that teachers' responses reflected their authentic practices without researcher intervention (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). This approach provided evidence-based insights into how teacher characteristics influence the implementation of play-based strategies and their impact on language development outcomes in preschool classrooms.

Population and Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in selected public early childhood education schools under the supervision of the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Schools Division Office II (SDO II) in Bautista District. The study focused on preschool teachers and the

extent to which they use play-based activities to support preschoolers' language development.

The target population comprised 48 preschool teachers employed in DepEd-accredited schools in the Bautista District. A total enumeration technique was applied, meaning all eligible preschool teachers within the selected schools were included in the study to ensure comprehensive data collection.

To address the research objectives, data were gathered from preschool teachers regarding:

1. Their profile variables (age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, teaching position, years of teaching experience, and number of trainings/seminars attended on play-based learning).
2. The extent of their utilization of play-based activities in developing word vocabulary skills, sentence complexity skills, and pragmatic language skills among preschoolers.

Participation in this study was voluntary, and strict measures were implemented to uphold confidentiality and ethical research practices as prescribed by DepEd research policies. The findings of this study contributed to enhancing play-based learning strategies in early childhood education, aligning with DepEd's commitment to learner-centered, play-based pedagogical approaches under the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) Program and the Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157).

Table 1
List of Elementary Schools in Bautista District

No.	Name of School	Number of Preschool Teachers
1	Diaz, Sr. Elementary School	4
2	Artacho Elementary School	3
3	Baluyot Elementary School	4
4	Bautista Central School SPED Center	5
5	Cabuan Elementary School	4
6	Emilio C. Palaming Elementary School	3
7	Ketegan Elementary School	4
8	Nibaliw Elementary School	5
9	Pogo Elementary School	4
10	Poponto Elementary School	3
11	Vacante Elementary School	4
12	Villanueva Elementary School	5
	TOTAL	48

Data Gathering Tools

This study employed a quantitative research design to assess the extent to which preschoolers use play-based activities for language development. The study focused on preschool teachers in selected DepEd-accredited early childhood education schools under the Schools Division Office II (SDO II), Bautista District.

To ensure objective data collection, the researcher employed a standardized survey questionnaire administered to preschool teachers. A structured instrument was developed to collect quantifiable data on various aspects of respondents' professional backgrounds and experiences. Specifically, the survey collected information on teachers' demographic profiles, including age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, teaching position, years of teaching experience, and the number of training or seminar sessions attended on play-based learning. This organized approach ensured that the data gathered were systematic, measurable, and aligned with the study's objectives, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the utilization of play-based activities in language development (Pyle et al., 2020).

The researcher used a checklist questionnaire to assess the extent of play-based activity use in developing preschoolers' language skills. Specifically, the instrument evaluated three key areas: vocabulary, sentence complexity, and pragmatic language. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always) to quantify the frequency and extent of play-based activity implementation. This scale measured how often preschool teachers integrate play-based strategies into their language instruction, ranging from never using these activities to always incorporating them in daily lessons.

To ensure validity and alignment with educational standards, the instrument used the Questionnaire Checklist on Establishing Content Validity of the Instrument by Dr. Lelia V. Meimban (2007), and followed principles set by DepEd's Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (KCG) and Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) Program. These frameworks emphasize the role of play in early childhood education, ensuring that the assessed activities align with national learning competencies and best practices for language development. By structuring the questionnaire based on these established guidelines, the study provided reliable, data-driven insights into how preschool teachers implement play-based learning to enhance language acquisition.

To develop the Checklist Questionnaire on the Extent of Utilization of Play-Based Activities in Language Development, the study adapted items guided by the Department of Education's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Checklist, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016. This nationally recognized tool served as a reference in identifying relevant indicators of preschoolers' language development, focusing on three key areas: word vocabulary, sentence complexity, and pragmatic language skills. By aligning the checklist questionnaire with the ECD standards, the instrument ensured that the assessment of play-based language development activities was grounded in established early childhood education benchmarks. The data collected from this assessment underwent statistical analysis to identify patterns and relationships between the extent of

play-based learning utilization and language development outcomes among preschoolers. This approach provided objective and data-driven insights into the effectiveness of play-based strategies in enhancing early language skills.

The questionnaire and checklist were validated by experts using the Survey/Interview Validation Rubric for Expert Panel (Dr. Lelia V. Meimban, 2007). The validation process ensured clarity, reliability, and alignment with DepEd's early childhood education standards.

Data Gathering Procedure

After finalizing and validating the research instruments, the researcher sought official approval from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Pangasinan II, Binalonan, Pangasinan. A formal letter was submitted to obtain the necessary endorsement and clearance to conduct the study among preschool teachers in the Bautista District.

Upon approval, the data collection process commenced. The researcher personally distributed the validated structured questionnaire to selected preschool teachers in the Bautista District. The survey questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data on teacher-related factors, including age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, teaching position, and the number of trainings attended on play-based learning. In addition, the instrument gathered data on the extent of play-based activity use in promoting preschoolers' language development, focusing on vocabulary acquisition, sentence complexity, and pragmatic language use. Respondents rated their practices using a Likert scale, which allowed for reliable measurement of the frequency and degree of play-based activity implementation (Artini et al., 2021).

Moreover, the researcher ensured that all participating teachers received clear instructions for completing the questionnaire and remained available to address clarification during the data collection process. After data collection, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the responses using the designated research instruments. The analysis involved organizing, coding, and summarizing the data using appropriate statistical techniques, such as frequency counts, percentages, and correlation analysis. The findings were presented in a comprehensive report, accompanied by tables and descriptive summaries to facilitate clear interpretation and understanding of the results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2022).

The study was conducted over a six-week period, which was divided into the following phases:

1. Week 1 – Preparation Phase: Validation of survey instruments and securing approvals from the SDS and school heads
2. Weeks 2–3 – Data Collection Phase: Administering surveys to preschool teachers
3. Weeks 4–5 – Data Analysis Phase: Organizing, coding, and statistically analyzing the data

4. Week 6 – Interpretation and Reporting: Finalizing the results and preparing the research report

Treatment of Data

After the data were collected using the questionnaire checklist, the researcher systematically sorted, tallied, organized, and tabulated the responses using Microsoft Excel. This process ensured that the data were accurately structured, enabling the identification and correction of any inconsistencies or input errors. The use of Excel facilitated efficient data management and provided a clear framework for organizing large amounts of information, which is essential for reliable analysis. By preparing the dataset in this manner, the researcher established a solid foundation for subsequent statistical procedures, ensuring that the analysis could be conducted with precision and rigor (Kumar, 2023).

The collected data were analyzed using the following quantitative statistical methods:

1. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage) to analyze the profile of preschool teachers and the extent of play-based learning utilization
2. Pearson correlation to test the relationship between the extent of utilization of play-based learning and teacher profile variables

The data were encoded into Microsoft Excel for organization and statistical analysis. The results were interpreted based on established statistical significance levels ($p \leq 0.05$) to determine whether relationships between variables were significant.

The analysis of data was conducted through Microsoft Excel, and the statistical results were interpreted using the following scales:

Literal Rating	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Rating	Transmuted Rating
A	4.50- 5.00	Always (A)	Very Extensive (VE)
B	3.50- 4.49	Often (O)	Extensive (E)
C	2.50- 3.49	Sometimes (S0	Moderately Extensive (ME)
D	1.50- 2.49	Seldom (Sl)	Slightly Extensive (SE)
E	1.00 -1.49	Never (N)	Not Extensive (NE)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and analyzes the data gathered from preschool teachers in the Bautista District regarding their profiles and the extent of their utilization of play-based activities in developing preschoolers' language skills. The purpose of this section is to provide a clear presentation of the results in line with the research objectives and to interpret the findings with reference to existing theories and related studies.

Profile of the Preschool Teachers

Table 2 shows the demographic profiles of the 40 preschool teachers from the Bautista District who participated in this study. The information provides important context for understanding their practices and the extent to which they utilize play-based activities in language development.

Table 2
Profile of the Preschool Teachers
n=40

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	above 50	12	30.0
	41-50	8	20.0
	31-40	8	20.0
	21-30	12	30.0
Sex	female	40	100.0
Civil Status	Single	15	37.5
	Married	22	55.0
	widow/er	3	7.5
Highest Educational Attainment	Master's Degree	16	40.0
	Bachelor's Degree	24	60.0
Teaching Position	Master Teacher	1	2.5
	Teacher III	23	57.5
	Teacher I	16	40.0
Number of Trainings/Seminars Attended on Play-Based Learning	5 and more	6	15.0
	3-4	8	20.0
	1-2	18	45.0
	None	8	20.0

Age. The respondents are evenly distributed between the age groups 21–30 and those above 50, each representing 30% of the sample. The remaining teachers fall within the 31–40 (20%) and 41–50 (20%) age brackets. This shows a balanced composition of younger and older educators, combining fresh pedagogical perspectives with the experiences of long-serving teachers. According to the Philippine Professional Standards

for Teachers (PPST), age diversity within a teaching workforce promotes collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, and mentoring relationships, thereby strengthening instructional practices (Department of Education, 2017).

Sex. All respondents are female (100%). This is consistent with national and global trends in early childhood education, as the field is commonly dominated by women. This demographic pattern is often associated with nurturing and caregiving qualities, which align well with the foundational philosophy and practices of play-based learning.

Civil Status. More than half of the respondents are married (55%), followed by single teachers (37.5%) and widowed teachers (7.5%). Civil status may influence a teacher's availability for professional development and additional responsibilities. The predominance of married respondents may indicate the presence of family support systems, potentially contributing to stability in their teaching roles and to their willingness to apply innovative approaches such as play-based learning.

Highest Educational Attainment. A majority of the teachers hold a Bachelor's degree (60%), while 40% have obtained a Master's degree. This shows that the teaching workforce is academically prepared, with a notable proportion pursuing higher qualifications. Advanced educational attainment often correlates with greater pedagogical competence and openness to child-centered instructional strategies, including play-based learning.

Teaching Position. Most teachers hold mid-level and entry-level teaching positions: Teacher III (57.5%) and Teacher I (40%). Only one respondent holds a Master Teacher position (2.5%). This suggests that while many teachers are experienced, the group has limited formal leadership or mentoring positions. Such distribution may influence the dissemination and modeling of innovative classroom practices, including play-based approaches.

Number of Trainings/Seminars Attended on Play-Based Learning. In terms of professional development, 45% of teachers have attended 1–2 training sessions on play-based learning, 20% have attended 3–4, and 15% have attended five or more. However, 20% have not attended any training related to this approach. These data indicate that although many teachers have received some exposure to play-based pedagogy, there remains a significant gap in specialized training. This may affect both the consistency and quality of play-based strategies implemented in classroom language activities.

Overall, the profile of preschool teachers in the Bautista District shows a predominantly female, academically qualified workforce composed of both young and senior educators. While many have some level of training in play-based learning, gaps in professional development remain. These characteristics provide the necessary context for interpreting their responses regarding the extent of their utilization of play-based activities to support language development among preschoolers.

Extent of Utilization of Preschool Teachers of the Play-Based Activities

Table 3 presents the extent to which preschool teachers utilize play-based activities to develop vocabulary skills among preschoolers.

Table 3

Extent of Utilization of Preschool Teachers of the Play-Based Activities along Vocabulary Skills

Play – based Activities	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
As a Preschool Teacher, I…		
1. use flashcards and picture – word association games to reinforce vocabulary and help children make connections between words and images.	4.78	Very Extensive
2. encourage children to name and label objects during daily classroom routines to reinforce vocabulary in a practical context.	4.76	Very Extensive
3. hold interactive read – aloud sessions with guided questioning to encourage comprehension and vocabulary development.	4.51	Very Extensive
4. sing alphabet songs and engage in phonemic awareness activities to help children develop early literacy skills.	4.51	Very Extensive
5. organize show – and – tell activities to encourage children to use expressive vocabulary when sharing about objects or experience.	4.46	Extensive
6. incorporate word games, such as rhyming games, sound matching, and riddles, to make learning fun and interactive.	4.39	Extensive
7. make use of real objects (realia) and environmental print to help children connect children to the world around them.	4.34	Extensive
8. use songs and nursery rhymes to introduce new vocabulary in a memorable way.	4.29	Extensive
9. incorporate sensory play activities that encourage language use, such as describing textures, colors and shapes.	4.27	Extensive
10. conduct storytelling sessions using picture books, big books, and visual aids to engage children and introduce new words.	4.05	Extensive
Average Weighted Mean	**4.44**	**Very Extensive**

Legend:
1 – **Not Extensive (1.00-1.49)**: This activity is never used in my classroom (0% of the time); 2 – **Slightly Extensive (1.50- 2.49)**: This activity is used very infrequently (1–25% of the time);
3 – **Moderately Extensive (2.50- 3.49)**: This activity is occasionally used, but not consistently (26–50% of the time);
4 – **Extensive (3.50-4.49):** This activity is regularly used in my classroom (51–75% of the time);
5 – **Very Extensive (4.50- 5.00)**: This activity is consistently used in my classroom (76–100% of the time)

The overall weighted mean of 4.44, interpreted as Very Extensive, indicates that teachers consistently integrate vocabulary-enhancing play activities into their daily classroom routines. This demonstrates a strong commitment to implementing vocabulary-building strategies within the context of play. Recent studies likewise affirm the effectiveness of play-based instruction in early childhood, emphasizing that interactive learning fosters stronger language outcomes among preschoolers (Coyne et al., 2025).

Among the strategies assessed, flashcards and picture–word association games had the highest weighted mean of 4.78, indicating Very Extensive. This suggests that these tools are the most frequently used by teachers in vocabulary development. Such findings align with international research indicating that visually stimulating materials enhance retention and word recognition through dual coding and the picture-superiority effect. A developmental study by Paldy et al. (2025) found that flashcards with clear and relatable visuals improved both memory and motivation in young learners. Similarly, a systematic review by Hamidah et al. (2024) confirmed that flashcard strategies strengthen active recall, phonemic awareness, and conceptual understanding of new vocabulary.

In contrast, storytelling using picture books, big books, and visual aids—while still interpreted as Extensive—recorded the lowest mean at 4.05. This slightly lower frequency may be attributed to constraints such as limited class time or access to story materials. However, existing research underscores storytelling as a powerful instructional tool for language development. Otoluwa et al. (2025) demonstrated that storytelling enriched with visual supports enhances vocabulary mastery and narrative comprehension among preschoolers. Likewise, augmented reality (AR) storybooks significantly improved young children's comprehension and retelling abilities, suggesting that integrating technology can help address limitations of traditional storytelling materials.

Overall, the results show that teachers favor interactive, visual, and repetitive activities—such as songs, labeling objects, word games, and sensory play—as core strategies for vocabulary development. These preferences are well-supported by research indicating that such activities promote engagement, contextual learning, and spaced repetition, all of which are essential for early language acquisition. Additionally, emerging technological tools like AI-powered cartoon video systems and generative image-supported storytelling are creating new pathways for enhancing vocabulary learning both at home and in school (Chen et al., 2024; Tsang et al., 2025).

While Table 3 highlights vocabulary development, Table 4 focuses on the use of play-based activities to enhance children's sentence-complexity skills.

Table 4 on the next page presents the extent to which preschool teachers use play-based activities to enhance children's sentence-complexity skills. The overall weighted mean of 4.32, interpreted as Extensive, indicates that teachers regularly implement activities designed to help children construct longer, more transparent, and more coherent sentences. This suggests that sentence-building strategies are consistently embedded in daily classroom interactions.

The highest-rated strategies include using “wh” questions during storytelling (WM = 4.71) and encouraging children to speak in complete sentences during class activities (WM = 4.71). These practices promote elaboration, detail, and clarity in children's verbal responses. Such questioning techniques are known to stimulate deeper thinking and syntactic development, making them essential for fostering expressive language proficiency. These results are consistent with those of Clark and Jones (2024), who found that elaborative questioning techniques significantly improve young children’s language expression, sentence structure, and oral fluency, supporting deeper engagement and cognitive development (Clark & Jones, 2024).

Table 4

Extent of Utilization of Preschool Teachers of the Play-Based Activities along Sentence Complexity Skills

Play – based Activities	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
As a Preschool Teacher, I…		
1. use “wh” questions (who, what, where, when, why, how) during storytelling to prompt children to elaborate on their ideas and create more complex sentences.	4.71	Very Extensive
2. consistently encourage children to use complete sentences during class activities to build fluency in speaking and sentence construction.	4.71	Very Extensive
3. encourage children to narrate personal experience by asking them questions such as “what did you do over the weekend?” to help them from detailed responses.	4.61	Very Extensive
4. do picture sequencing activities are used to help children describe story events, which aids in building longer and more coherent sentences.	4.46	Extensive
5. resort to group discussions where children describe objects, pictures, or situations are regular part of my teaching, helping children develop and practice longer sentences.	4.44	Extensive

6. encourage children to give instructions or describe how things work to foster sentence complexity and logical sequencing.	4.39	Extensive
7. recite simple dialogues or scripts in pretend play helps children practice constructing longer sentences in a structured way.	4.32	Extensive
8. incorporate sentence – building games, such as finishing sentences, expanding simple phrases, to encourage children to stretch their language skills.	4.24	Extensive
9. use role – playing and dramatic play such as pretending to be a teacher, doctor, vendor, and other professional play, to encourage children to practice forming more elaborate sentences.	3.68	Extensive
10. do puppet shows and dialogue – based storytelling are activities I frequently use to promote sentence construction through interactive dialogue.	3.61	Extensive
Average Weighted Mean	**4.32**	**Extensive**

Legend:
1 – **Not Extensive (1.00-1.49)**: This activity is never used in my classroom (0% of the time); 2 – **Slightly Extensive (1.50- 2.49)**: This activity is used very infrequently (1–25% of the time);
3 – **Moderately Extensive (2.50- 3.49)**: This activity is occasionally used, but not consistently (26–50% of the time);
4 – **Extensive (3.50-4.49):** This activity is regularly used in my classroom (51–75% of the time);
5 – **Very Extensive (4.50- 5.00)**: This activity is consistently used in my classroom (76–100% of the time)

Another strategy rated as Very Extensive is encouraging children to narrate personal experiences (WM = 4.61). Experience-sharing activities naturally prompt children to form more detailed, connected sentences, allowing them to practice narrative sequencing and expand their vocabulary in a meaningful context. Meanwhile, activities such as picture sequencing (WM = 4.46) and group discussions (WM = 4.44) were rated Extensive, indicating that teachers frequently employ visual and collaborative strategies to scaffold children's ability to describe events, objects, and situations in extended sentences.

Other play-based methods, such as giving instructions (WM = 4.39), reciting simple dialogues in pretend play (WM = 4.32), and incorporating sentence-building games (WM = 4.24), also fall under the Extensive category. These activities support logical sequencing, sentence expansion, and the use of functional language.

The lowest rated activities—though still interpreted as Extensive—are role-playing professional roles (WM = 3.68) and puppet shows or dialogue-based storytelling (WM = 3.61). These slightly lower ratings can be linked to practical factors, such as the availability of materials, time required to set up dramatic play scenes, or classroom management demands. Similarly, Wanicharoen (2024) noted that while pretend and dramatic play activities are beneficial for language development, their implementation may be constrained by logistical and resource limitations in preschool settings.

Overall, the results confirm that teachers consistently utilize a range of play-based strategies that promote sentence complexity. The strong emphasis on questioning techniques, narrative prompts, and guided discussions reflects best practices in early language instruction. This is supported by Wasik and Hindman (2014), who emphasized that interactive storytelling and meaningful teacher–child dialogue play a critical role in supporting expressive language development in early childhood settings.

Building on the findings on sentence-complexity skills in Table 4, Table 5 on the next page presents the extent to which preschool teachers utilize play-based activities to develop children's pragmatic language skills. The overall weighted mean of 4.45, interpreted as Extensive, indicates that teachers regularly implement strategies to enhance children's ability to use language appropriately in social and functional contexts. Notably, this domain obtained the highest average rating among the language skills assessed, highlighting the strong emphasis placed on social communication in early childhood classrooms.

The most frequently utilized strategy is encouraging conversational exchanges with peers and teachers, which achieved a weighted mean of 4.85, interpreted as Very Extensive. This underscores the importance teachers place on fostering interpersonal communication, turn-taking, and active listening—key components of pragmatic competence. These findings align with Girard et al. (2024), who reported that frequent, meaningful conversational interactions significantly contribute to young children's language development and social competence.

Other strategies rated as Very Extensive include incorporating polite expressions (WM = 4.71), facilitating play-based activities that require following multi-step instructions (WM = 4.66), and encouraging children to express thoughts and feelings (WM = 4.61).

Table 5

Extent of Utilization of Preschool Teachers of the Play-Based Activities along with Pragmatic Language Skills

Play – based Activities	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
As a Preschool Teacher, I…		
1. consistently encourage children to engage in conversational exchanges with both peers and teachers, giving them opportunities to practice social language skills in various contexts.	4.85	Very Extensive
2. use guided interactions focusing on polite expressions such "please", "thank you", and "excuse me" are regularly incorporated to reinforce positive social language habits.	4.71	Very Extensive

3. create play – based scenarios where children must follow multi – step instructions, helping them develop language comprehension and cooperative communication.	4.66	Very Extensive
4. encouraging children to express their thoughts and feelings, helping them use language to communicate their emotions and experiences appropriately.	4.61	Very Extensive
5. incorporate turn – raking games that promote active listening and responding, helping children learn to communicate effectively with others.	4.44	Extensive
6. use group storytelling is an activity I often use, where children take turns contributing to a story, encouraging collaborative communication and language skills.	4.44	Extensive
7. group play activities are used frequently to encourage communication and collaboration among children, fostering teamwork and social language use.	4.37	Extensive
8. engage children in role – playing social situations, such as greetings, asking for help, and sharing, to help them practice appropriate social language in real – life context.	4.37	Extensive
9. Employ problem – solving activities that require children to discuss and negotiate are regularly used to promote cooperative language and decision – making skills.	4.29	Extensive
10. use puppets or dolls to act real – life conversations, giving children a fun and engaging way to learn social language skills.	3.73	Extensive
Average Weighted Mean	**4.45**	**Extensive**

1 – **Not Extensive (1.00-1.49)**: This activity is never used in my classroom (0% of the time); 2 – **Slightly Extensive (1.50- 2.49)**: This activity is used very infrequently (1–25% of the time);
3 – **Moderately Extensive (2.50- 3.49)**: This activity is occasionally used, but not consistently (26–50% of the time);
4 – **Extensive (3.50-4.49):** This activity is regularly used in my classroom (51–75% of the time);
5 – **Very Extensive (4.50- 5.00)**: This activity is consistently used in my classroom (76–100% of the time)

These activities promote respectful communication, comprehension, self-expression, and emotional literacy—critical foundations for social interaction and classroom participation.

Meanwhile, activities such as turn-taking games (WM = 4.44), group storytelling (WM = 4.44), and group play activities (WM = 4.37) were rated as Extensive. These strategies encourage children to collaborate, negotiate meaning, and practice reciprocal communication in both structured and unstructured play settings.

The least utilized strategy, though still rated as Extensive, is using puppets or dolls to act out real-life conversations (WM = 3.73). This slightly lower rating may be attributed to limited materials or teachers' preference for more spontaneous, child-led social interactions that require less preparation. Mendoza and Tanaka (2025) also noted that teachers often prioritize naturalistic role-play over structured puppet activities due to their flexibility and immediate relevance to children's interests.

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers actively foster pragmatic competence by integrating activities that promote social communication, cooperation, emotional expression, and functional language use. This is consistent with research showing that play-based, peer-mediated interventions can produce significant improvements in pragmatic language skills, including social communication and collaborative behaviors in early childhood contexts (Parsons et al., 2020). These results highlight the central role of teacher-facilitated play experiences in supporting children's ability to use language effectively in social interactions, which contributes not only to academic engagement but also to successful peer relationships and broader communicative competence.

Table 6 presents an overall weighted mean of 4.40, interpreted as "Extensive," indicating that preschool teachers consistently integrate play-based activities to enhance children's language development across the three domains: vocabulary, sentence complexity, and pragmatic language. Among these, pragmatic language skills obtained the highest mean (WM = 4.45), followed closely by vocabulary development (WM = 4.44), and sentence complexity (WM = 4.32).

Table 6

Overall Extent of Utilization of Preschool Teachers of the Play-Based Activities

Domains of Play – based Activities	Average Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1. Vocabulary Skills	4.44	Extensive
2. Sentence Complexity Skills	4.32	Extensive
3. Pragmatic Language Skills	4.45	Extensive
Overall Weighted Mean	**4.40**	**Extensive**

1 – **Not Extensive (1.00-1.49)**: This activity is never used in my classroom (0% of the time); 2 – **Slightly Extensive (1.50- 2.49)**: This activity is used very infrequently (1–25% of the time);
3 – **Moderately Extensive (2.50- 3.49)**: This activity is occasionally used, but not consistently (26–50% of the time);
4 – **Extensive (3.50-4.49):** This activity is regularly used in my classroom (51–75% of the time);
5 – **Very Extensive (4.50- 5.00)**: This activity is consistently used in my classroom (76–100% of the time)

This pattern suggests that while teachers regularly employ play-based approaches across all language domains, there is a slightly greater emphasis on children's social and functional language use, particularly in contexts requiring communication, turn-taking, and emotional expression. This aligns with the holistic nature of early childhood

instruction, where language learning is naturally embedded in social interaction and collaborative play (Aspinall et al., 2025).

The emphasis placed on pragmatic development reflects research indicating that skills such as polite communication, negotiation during play, and appropriate emotional expression form a strong foundation for later academic success and positive peer relationships (Mendoza & Tanaka, 2025). Meanwhile, vocabulary and sentence complexity—though slightly lower in mean—remain essential components of early literacy and are effectively supported through teacher questioning, storytelling, and interactive play experiences.

Overall, the results highlight that preschool teachers consistently use play-based strategies to foster comprehensive language development, ensuring that learners develop not only structural language skills but also the social competence necessary for effective communication.

Table 7 on the next page examines whether the extent to which preschool teachers use play-based activities for language development differs across various teacher profile variables, including age, gender, marital status, position, educational background, and recent training. The analysis used Wilks' Lambda and associated p-values, with statistical significance established at $p < 0.05$.

The results indicate no significant differences in vocabulary skills, sentence complexity, or pragmatic language skills across all teacher profile variables. In each case, the p-values were greater than 0.05, suggesting that the extent of use of play-based strategies remains consistent across teachers' demographic and professional characteristics.

This uniformity implies the presence of shared pedagogical practices or standardized implementation of play-based instruction within the teachers' institutional or regional settings. It may also reflect professional development norms or common curricular frameworks that promote play as a foundational strategy for language instruction in early childhood education.

Although these results endorse the broad use of play-based approaches, further studies are recommended to investigate the factors that may account for this consistency—such as the quality of training, district policies, or the institution's culture—and to assess whether this uniformity is related to instructional effectiveness or to children's outcomes.

Significant Difference in the Extent of Utilization of Play-based Activities Across Preschool Teachers' Profile Variables

Table 7

Significant Difference in the Extent of Utilization of Play-based Activities Across Preschool Teachers' Profile Variables

Extent of Utilization of Play-Based Activities	Preschool Teachers' Profile Variables											
	Age		Gender		Civil status		Position		Highest educational attainment		Trainings recently attended	
	Wilks Lambda	p-value	Wilks Lambda	p-value	Wilks Lambda	p-value	Wilks Lambda	p-value	Wilks Lambda	p-value	Wilks Lambda	p-value
A. Along Vocabulary Skills	21.32^{ns}	0.090	21.32^{ns}	0.090	39.16^{ns}	0.070	39.16^{ns}	0.070	21.32^{ns}	0.090	21.32^{ns}	0.090
B. Along Sentence Complexity Skills	39.16^{ns}	0.070	21.32^{ns}	0.090	21.32^{ns}	0.090	21.32^{ns}	0.090	21.32^{ns}	0.090	39.16^{ns}	0.070
C. Along Pragmatic Language Skills	21.32^{ns}	0.090	21.32^{ns}	0.090	21.32^{ns}	0.090	39.16^{ns}	0.070	39.16^{ns}	0.070	21.32^{ns}	0.090

Plan of Action to Enhance the Utilization of Play-Based Activities in Language Development Among Preschoolers

Guided by the findings, there is no need for a comprehensive action plan, as the preschool teachers consistently use play-based activities across the three domains of language development: vocabulary, sentence complexity, and pragmatic language. The

results indicate that these activities are already being effectively implemented, reflecting a high level of integration into their teaching practices.

On the other hand, when analyzed per indicator, the findings reveal areas for improvement in the following aspects:

- Utilizing puppet shows and dialogue-based storytelling to promote sentence construction through interactive dialogue (WM = 3.61)
- Incorporating role-play and dramatic play (e.g., pretending to be a teacher, doctor, or vendor) to encourage children to form more elaborate sentences (WM = 3.68)
- Employing puppets or dolls to simulate real-life conversations, making language learning fun and engaging while enhancing social language skills (WM = 3.71)

To ensure that these identified areas for improvement are addressed effectively, the following action plan is proposed. This plan outlines specific objectives, activities, involved stakeholders, timeframes, estimated budgets, success indicators, and sustainability measures to enhance the utilization of play-based activities among preschool teachers.

Table 8
Plan of Action to Enhance the Utilization of Play-Based Activities in Language Development Among Preschoolers

Objectives	Strategies/Activities	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Budget	Success Indicators	Sustainability Measures
Improve use of puppet shows (WM=3.61).	- Train teachers on puppet use. - Create a library of puppet scripts and materials.	Teachers, School Heads	1 month	₱5,000	Increased classroom use of puppet shows (target WM: 4.0).	Maintain a puppet library and provide regular training.
Enhance role-play activities (WM=3.68).	- Provide lesson plans with role-play scenarios. - Supply costumes and props.	Teachers, Parents	1-2 months	₱5,000	Improved sentence formation during role-play (target WM: 4.2).	Encourage parent donations for props and hold role-play days.
Use puppets/dolls for conversati	- Organize puppet-making workshops. - Develop	Teachers, Parents, Pupils	2 months	₱3,000	Increased use of puppets/dolls in	Establish puppets/dolls as classroom

ons (WM=3.71).	conversation scenarios using puppets/dolls.				activities (target WM: 4.3).	tools with annual refresh.
Build teacher skills in play-based learning.	- Conduct a seminar on play-based strategies. - Provide certificates for participation.	Teachers, Trainers	2 months	₱4,000	Teachers using play-based methods effectively in lessons.	Create a network for sharing resources and practices.
Engage community in activities.	- Host Play-Based Learning Days. - Partner with local artisans for puppet-making.	Teachers, Parents, Community	Bi-annual event	₱5,000/event	Positive feedback and increased participation from stakeholders.	Make the event a yearly tradition with community support.

Conclusions

The following summarizes the key findings of the study, which were informed by the specific research questions:

1. Preschool teachers in the Bautista District are mostly young and have moderate experience, but many have few trainings in play-based learning. This indicates the need for additional professional development to enhance their skills.
2. Teachers often use play-based methods in language lessons, particularly interactive and visual activities. However, storytelling, puppet shows, and role-play are used less frequently due to practical challenges, highlighting areas that require more support.
3. Teachers implement play-based strategies at similar levels across age, sex, and educational attainment. This suggests that school rules and the curriculum—rather than personal characteristics—affect how these strategies are employed.
4. Teachers' personal backgrounds do not determine the extent of play-based activity use. Instead, school resources, policies, and access to training appear to have a greater influence on their practices.
5. A clear action plan is needed to improve and sustain the use of play-based activities, especially those that are underutilized. This will help teachers enhance their competence and support better language development for preschoolers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The district should provide regular training, workshops, and coaching on play-based learning to help teachers strengthen their skills and confidence.
2. Schools should provide more materials and practical support—such as resources for storytelling, puppet shows, and role-play—to help teachers use these strategies more frequently.
3. School policies should be reviewed and improved to support the consistent use of play-based activities across all preschool classrooms.
4. System-wide support, including access to training, adequate learning materials, and administrative assistance, should be strengthened so that teachers can apply play-based approaches effectively.
5. A structured plan of action should be developed and implemented to promote and sustain the regular use of all play-based activities, especially those that are less utilized.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The participants in this study were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, procedures, and potential risks associated with the research prior to their participation. Detailed explanations regarding the study's goals, the nature of the survey, and the intended use of the data were provided to ensure that participants could make an informed decision about their involvement. Official consent was secured from the Schools Division Office (SDO II) as well as the respective school heads before the administration of the survey instruments, ensuring compliance with institutional and governmental regulations. All participating teachers were explicitly informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any penalties or negative consequences.

To maintain the highest standards of ethical research, the confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly protected. Teachers' identities and responses were coded and securely stored to prevent unauthorized access or disclosure, thereby safeguarding sensitive information. Moreover, all procedures were conducted in accordance with the DepEd research ethics guidelines (DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017), which emphasize the importance of informed consent, voluntary participation, and the protection of respondents' rights. Participants were assured that the results of the study would be reported in aggregate form only, with no personal identifiers revealed, and that the findings would be used solely for academic purposes and to inform educational practices in early childhood education. These measures collectively ensured that ethical considerations were rigorously upheld throughout the research process.

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This journey is a testimony of how a silent prayer became a loud answer through God's grace and the love of the people He placed along the way. To Him be all the glory and honor.

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